

K.Ahmad Abbas’s “Sparrows” A Study for Young Readers

Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, shortly, K.Ahmad Abbas (1914-) is a versatile person. He is a writer, a film director and a journalist. He has written a travel book named “Outside India”, a book of short stories named “Rice and Other Stories” and a biography on Indira Gandhi. As a short story writer, Abbas is known for writing stories that deal with the pains of common people.

“Sparrows” is a very touching story by Abbas. It deals with man-woman relationship, father-son relationship, man-society relationship and human-birds relationship. But basically it deals with Rahim Khan’s cruelty, his past and his conversion into a kind man.

The story begins with talks of Rahim Khan’s cruelty. When Rahim Khan is seen returning home with his oxen, the hilarious talks of the village people subside. The village people on the chaupal talk about Rahim Khan’s cruelty. They call him “hard-hearted devil”. He has beaten poor children, mare, even his own wife, sons and oxen. They complain that Rahim Khan is getting worse and worse each day. When he reaches home, a neighbouring woman informs Rahim Khan that his wife had left him and Rahim Khan knew that she would leave him one day tired of his beatings.

The story deals with Rahim Khan’s past. In his twenties, Rahim Khan was a promising youth full of the joy of life. He was well versed in arts like Kabadi, wrestling and swimming. As a young man Rahim Khan had two ambitions: (1) to join circus and (2) to marry a girl named Radha. Rahim Khan was impressed by the circus that had come to his village and wanted to join circus company. But the idea of joining the circus was

soon dismissed by Rahim Khan's parents. His family was known for farming and it would look funny if a farmers' son joins circus. Similarly, the idea of marrying Radha was dismissed by Rahim Khan's father. How can a Muslim boy marry a Hindu girl, a Kafir ? Rahim Khan wanted to revolt against his father's authority, but he could not muster courage. At last, Radha married elsewhere. Rahim Khan also married, but without choice. His parents selected the girl, fixed the date, ordered gaudy clothes for him, sat him on the horse, took him to the girl's house and the Nikah was performed. From the day of his marriage, Rahim Khan wanted to take revenge on his parents, his family and on society. They were too far and too big to take revenge and so he poured out all his bitterness on his wife. His sons Bundu and Nuru ran away because of his excessive beatings. At last his wife also left him and he became all alone after fifty.

Rahim Khan's conversion into a kind man is very moving. He finds a nest in his hut. In the nest live two big sparrows and their two featherless mites. Rahim Khan treats them kindly giving them food and shelter. He makes a family with the sparrows. He calls the two mites Bundu and Nuru after his sons. His latent suppressed kindness comes up and he learns anew lessons of humanity. In his last days, Rahim Khan is heard talking to sparrows by the peeping neighbours. They believe that Rahim Khan has gone mad. By the time Rahim Khan's wife and sons come back, Rahim Khan has already died.

In conclusion, Abbas's "Sparrows" is a very thought-provoking story. It mirrors the kindness of man which is sometimes suppressed among adverse circumstances. The sparrows can do what the society cannot do for a man. This message is also very important in the story.